

**ABSTRACT**

A dating related web site incorporates a number of services of interest to subscribers seeking a compatible mate or friend. A would-be subscriber first specifies profile information including authentication information, information relating to qualities desired in a friend and mate, and a screen image icon. The profile information is stored in a database associate with a web server hosting the dating site. The subscriber can then log onto the site and advantage the of chat room environments featured at the site. Rooms are hierarchically organized into lobbies and sub-lobbies corresponding to topics and sub-topics of discussion. In addition, the lobby and sub-lobby screens indicate the concentration of compatible participants in the rooms of corresponding lobbies and sub-lobbies, thus allowing easy navigation to a desirable room. In addition to manual navigation, the site features automatic navigation allowing the user to find a chat room with compatible participants automatically once a sub-lobby is selected. Upon participating in a chat session, the user and a participant may choose a "virtual date" option featured at the site to take advantage of a private chat environment and to view a private, date-related video clip. "Physical Attractiveness" criteria also permit the subscriber to screen members in the database based on community ratings of the physical attractiveness of the members and to limit access to the subscriber's profile to members having a physical attractiveness ranking within a user-selected range around that of the physical attractiveness ranking for the subscriber.